

LIZETTE
WOODWORTH
REESE

SPICEWOOD

The NORMAN, REMINGTON CO.
1921

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SPICEWOOD



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SPICEWOOD BY LIZETTE
WOODWORTH REESE



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TO
MY MOTHER

The thanks of the author are due to the publishers of Scribner's, Harper's, The Smart Set, The Forum, The Sonnet, The Midland, The Bookman and Contemporary Verse for permission to include in this collection the poems which first appeared in these magazines

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SPICEWOOD



RAISE God that of a surety it is spring!

For out in the old field there starts to
bloom

A spicewood bush, that frail but
golden thing;

A little light brought into a great room;

Or coins held tight in a strict, careful hand,

For fear they may be lost or spent too soon.

Blown full of wind, this stretch of humble land,

Where comes the Year, through the pale afternoon,

Over this fire of fagots in the grass—

That but a while ago he set aflame—

To warm his chilled young body for a space.

The country folk, who plodding houseward pass,

See but some neighbor's lad dim stooping there—

Would he but turn and show his wistful face!

THE COMMON LOT

I AM so little that the gods go by,
And leave me to my house, my garden plot,
My clump of jonquils in a windy spot;
I tend the herbs; I look up at the sky.
As great a thing am I as e'er drew breath—
The grey, hushed steps of them that bore from here
My lovely ones still sound within mine ear--
Yea, great enough to have been hurt by Death!
Nothing I reckon of the poms of men;
I am too little for a sword, a crown,
Or any purples that the kings begirt;
Out in the spring my jonquils blow again,
Yellow and windy as the lights of town—
But I would die, I am so hurt, so hurt!

A WET SPELL

ONE star; the dusk; a scrap of rain.
A little sad, alone,
Out of the wet old gardens blown,
The scent of mint pricks at the pane.

And market carts go by,
Into a large, soft sky,
Of grey, of ochre, too;
Dully they go their way,
Past file of houses rainy grey,
A file of blue.

One spout is quick and sweet,
One broken and high;
Their poignancies fill all the country street—
The ache of old regret,
Down the thin wet—
Into the large, soft sky,
The market carts drip by.

ARRAIGNMENT

WHAT wage, what guerdon, Life, asked I of
you?

Brooches; old houses; yellow trees in fall;
A gust of daffodils by a grey wall;
Books; small lads' laughter; song at drip of dew?
Or said I, "Make me April. I would go,
Night-long, day-long, down the gay little grass,
And therein see myself as in a glass;
There is none other weather I would know?"
Content was I to live like any flower,
Sweetly and humbly; dream each season round
The blossomy things that serve a girl for bread,
Inviolat against the bitter hour.
You poured my dreams like water on the ground:
I think it would be best if I were dead.

WISE

AN apple orchard smells like wine;
A succory flower is blue;
Until Grief touched these eyes of mine,
Such things I never knew.

And now indeed I know so plain
Why one would like to cry
When spouts are full of April rain—
Such lonely folk go by!

So wise—so wise—that my tears fall
Each breaking of the dawn;
That I would run to tell you all—
But you are dead and gone.

TRIUMPH

HEART'S measure gave I. Is it all forgot?
Winds cannot blow or beat it into dust,
Or waters cover it, or moth and rust
Corrupt it into aught that it was not.
For what is more remembered than the spring?
The scarlet tulips running through the grass
By a wet wall, and gone with but Alas?
(I know not how I know this old, old thing).
How now, poor one, that loved me for a space?
Mine is the triumph of the tulip flower;
My ruined April will not let you by;
To east my laughter, and to west my face;
Housed with you ever, down some poignant hour,
There drifts the scrap of music that was I.

A MARKET SONG

WHAT'S to sell in town to-day?
What's to sell in town?

Golden, golden daffodils,
Blowing up and down

Charity plucked them in the dusk,
Phyllis in the dew;
The rosy girls of Huntingdon
Plucked them for me and you.

Withered women sell them now
From many a black old cart;
They sell us golden daffodils
For easing of the heart.

Three handfuls mine of that bright stuff;
One for myself I save;
One for a friend of many a year;
One for my mother's grave.

OLD HOUSES

OLD loveliness, set in the country wind,
Or down some vain town road the careless
tread,

Like hush of candles lighted for the dead,
That look of yours, half seeing and half blind.
Still do you strain at door, but we come not,
The little maids, the lads, bone of your bone;
In some sad wise, you keep the dusk alone,
Old loveliness, a many a day forgot.
But no; behind each weather do you pass,
The garnered poignancies of all the springs:
At some girl's belt in Lent the jonquils start;—
But, oh, their like in your old windy grass!
Then are we quick with tears, rememberings;
Once more, once more, are gathered to your heart!

A BLACKBERRY RAIN

THE weather deals in exquisite wares,
Like laneside brambles all a-row;
A hundred small and gusty airs,
That up and down the country blow.

And of a sudden a flaw of rain,
A handful of frail silver thrown
Across the sun now and again;
A scrap of little music blown

About a world all palely sweet,
From sky to sky in fragile white,
Whose folk fare gravely down the street
As though they walked in candlelight.

Oh love, tuck up your skirts and go
Out to the bramble-scented land,—
The brambles in a cloudy row—
With your true lover hand in hand!

For shall we mind a slap of rain?
A mist of sound from sky to sky?
A little music at the pane
That in a moment passes by?

Oh love, and love, at end of May,
These fair white sprigs a many a one!
Come pluck them as we make our way
Along the roads to Huntingdon.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE

A NARROW, old, scarred house, set in a stare
At the old graves that crumble to its door;
You cannot think it ever knew of yore
An April weather, or a thing so fair
As the small lantern of a daffodil
Swung down the silver windings of the rain,
But as a rumor blown along the pane,
That by it went, and left it vacant still.
Deep-memoried it stands, as in a gust
Of yesterdays, that beat about it all—
To some poor poignancy of music thinned—
A moment tears, then laughter gone to dust!
There, of a sudden, beyond the churchyard wall,
The three hushed sisters, passing through the wind!

CHLOE TO AMARYLLIS

THAT you are poor, that I grow old,
It matters not. Our battles hold.
The lovely, undisturbèd things
Are left for our rememberings.

Kings' houses; graves out on the downs;
Shop windows in great ancient towns;
The rooks tossed up the rosy sky
Out of the vicarage garden high;
The minster tower poignant with years
Breaking the grey dusk into tears.

Scraps of old music dewy-clear
Haunt us each turning of the year;
When fields are colored like a stone,
A thought of April can atone;
Of cowslip flowers golden small
Under a windy village wall.

That you are poor, and I grow old!
But memories keep; but battles hold;
The footspace snatched from quaking mire;
From dying dreams the undying fire;
And when we trod the perilous land,
The god all ready to our hand.

TANKLE-TINKLE-TANK

THE rector's attic window is a light,
Set high on shelf for all the folk to see;
His garden's windy-dim as it can be,
Where grow tall flags, some purple and some white.
The next house, too, holds one pane clearly red;
Three roofs beyond, the vane's a rosy flare;
Milk-heavy, slow, through the exquisite air,
The cows go tankling-tinkling to the shed.
Lost loveliness is broken down the wind;
Lost laughter fleet along the blur of wall;—
The cows go tankling to the barnyard near;—
And cloudy-pale, the shaken flowers behind,
The rector sees, through tears that aching fall,
His little daughter, dead this many a year.

THE WOOD THRUSH

DARK in the hollow;
Light on the hill;
Mallows in the grey yards,
Rosy-lipped and still.
Hush, hush!
From his closet in the dew,
Hark to the thrush!

Of what his singing?
Camelot, Rome?
Old houses in the wind?
Candlelight, home?
Yea, nay!
And of my early love,
Gone many a day.

LILAC DUSK

WHAT ghost of an old room comes, goes at
will,
Shaped there before you to your tired sight?
Is it kind-ceilinged, drenched with yellowy light,
A jug of flowering herbs upon the sill?
What part of me drifts thinly back to you,
Like scent of rainy grass blown to and fro?
A succory-colored gown praised long ago?
A turn of head? A wistful word or two?
This lilac dusk, when you unlock your door—
How sad a sound the little business makes—
All these and more! To a far loveliness grown,
Your town below seems like a jeweled shore,
The sky a lustrous sea that on it breaks.
An ache comes to the room. You are alone.

THE THORN-TREES OF HUNTINGDON

THE old thorn-trees of Huntingdon,
Oh, white they blow again!
Oh, white they blow in Huntingdon,
Down an old crooked lane!

In Huntingdon, in Huntingdon!
I swear, by high and low,
That you will find their lovely like
None other place you go.

The Old York Road looks rare indeed;
A saint's way is it now;
In white to east, in white to west,
With many a jeweled bough.

A way for Peter, James and John,
All gravely down to pass;
Or Thomas Kempen with a book
Across the bright young grass.

Or austere kings in withered gold,
As down a castle-yard,
With clanking reins that make the air
A music clear and hard.

The Thorn-Trees of Huntingdon

Or else my mother, coming soft,
Her skirts held from the wet,
To pluck an apronful of bloom
In her old house to set.

For the green bowl a sprig or two
To deck some window shelf;
And a great handful for the jug
Of blue and ancient delf.

I run out to the Old York Road;
I count them one by one;
Five in the west, four in the east,
Nine thorn-trees in the sun.

So shall I run when I am dead,
And wrapped in dust away,
To count the thorns of Huntingdon
Upon a morn in May.

TO MYSELF

GIRL, I am tired of blowing hot and cold;
Of being that with that, and this with this;
A loosened leaf no bough would ever miss,
At the wind's whim betwixt the sky and mould.
Of wearing masks. Oh, I would rend them all
Into the dust that by my door is blown;
Of my old secret bare me to the bone,
Myself at last, none other! I would call:—
"I had a lover once. This is the face
He lauded April-high and April-deep,
As fair a flower as hers of Camelot;
And yet he loved it but an April's space.
This is myself indeed. Now hear me weep.
I had a lover once, but he forgot."

WRITTEN IN A SONG-BOOK

A SONG is such a curious thing,
To last beyond a day in spring;
It comes from low; it comes from high;
Is all of earth, and all of sky.

From Laughter set at tavern door,
Round, rosy, with his cranks of yore;
From Grief, struck down upon the clod,
Crying his wild heart out to God.

Like hawthorn whitening in the grass,
To haunt the folk that by it pass;
Like sheep-bells tinkling small and clear
In star-lit fields at end of year;
Like dusk-pink silks; like Tyrian gold,
A little verse remembered, old.

And while you polish line by line—
For though so frail, it must be fine—
Ere it turns lovely, as it must,
A hundred towns tumble to dust!

ODORS

A FLOWER betrays you—you, the blithe and
brave;

A succory blossom down some path we knew;

For being lovely, it was wholly you;

Ever it runs betwixt me and your grave.

Or else a song; perhaps, in broken wise,

Shrilled in the dusk from passing market wain,

A word of spring, of white quince in the rain;

From my day's task I look up to your eyes.

But, oh, the scent of smoke across the air,

Blown through the yellowy, phantom trees of town!

Of grass against a skirt out in the sun!

Of an old cupboard glistening up a stair!

I think sometime that I will sit me down

And weep my heart quite out, and so be done.

DROUGHT

SILENCE—and in the air
A stare.

One bush, the color of rust,
Stands in the endless lane;
And farther on, hot, hard of pane,
With roof shrunk black,
Headlong against the sky
A house is thrust;
Betwixt the twain,
Like meal poured from a sack,
Stirless, foot high—
The dust.

ELLEN HANGING CLOTHES

THE maid is out in the clear April light
Our store of linen hanging up to dry;
On clump of box, on the small grass there lie
Bits of thin lace, and broidery blossom-white.
And something makes tall Ellen—gesture, look—
Or else but that most ancient, simple thing,
Hanging the clothes upon a day in spring,
A Greek girl cut out some old lovely book.
The wet white flaps; a tune just come in mind,
The sound brims the still house. Our flags are out,
Blue by the box, blue by the kitchen stair;
Betwixt the two she trips across the wind,
Her warm hair blown all cloudy-wise about,
Slim as the flags, and every whit as fair.

A CAROL

JOSEPH was an old man;
Simple and tall was he,
Who went about in Bethlehem
To find, if it might be,

A little space beneath a roof,
For Jesus Christ to lie,
Safe, on His tender Mother's breast,
Until the dark went by.

He asked of women; he asked of men;
He asked of ox and ass,
All in a small, and broken shed,
Out in the village grass.

The women said nay; the men said nay;
And nay the great inn said;
There was no otherwhere to go
But that ramshackle shed.

A many a wind about it blew;
Its roof was withered and thin;
Oh, was not that a poor place
To house Christ Jesus in?

A WAR MEMORY

(1865)

*G*OD bless this house and keep us all from hurt.

She led us gravely up the straight long stair;
We were afraid; two held her by the skirt,

One by the hand, and so to bed and prayer.
How frail a thing the little candle shone!

Beneath its flame looked dim and soft and high
The chair, the drawers; she like a tall flower blown

In a great space under a shadowy sky.
God bless us all and Lee and Beauregard.—

Without, a soldier paced, in hated blue,
The road betwixt the tents in pale array
And our gnarled gate. But in the windy yard
White tulips raced along the drip of dew;—
Our mother with her candle went away.

LILACS

GOOD MAYERS, come to Huntingdon
This morning of the May;
Come out and pluck the lilac flower
That blows down Old York Way.

The white, the purple lilac flower,
That blows the fleet o'year,
The smell of the old country-side
Packed in the petals clear.

White lilacs at a windy wall,
Like hymns for the young dead;
And purple by the basketful
Along a tumbled shed.

White lilacs in the rector's grass,
As many as you can hold;
And purple fit for a king's house,
In dishes of fine gold.

The white, the purple lilac flower,
Of the fleet year a part;
Remembered music blown at dusk
Into an aching heart.

Lilacs

To Huntingdon, to Huntingdon,
Come, rich man, poor man, thief;
A lilac blows but seven days;
A day is very brief.

Come out, come out, good Maying folk;
Come out to Old York Lane;
Scarce are you here, but you must go;
So pluck, and pluck again.

A VIOLIN AT DUSK

STUMBLE to silence, all you uneasy things,
That pack the day with bluster and with fret.
For here is music at each window set;
Here is a cup which drips with all the springs
That ever bud a cowslip flower; a roof
To shelter till the argent weathers break;
A candle with enough of light to make
My courage bright against each dark reproof.
A hand's width of clear gold, unraveled out
The rosy sky, the little moon appears;
As they were splashed upon the paling red,
Vast, blurred, the village poplars lift about.
I think of young, lost things; of lilacs; tears;
I think of an old neighbor, long since dead.

A GIRL'S SONG

OH, I would sing! Oh, I would cry!
Oh, I would lay me down and die!
There is no lovely or strange thing
I would not do this day in spring.

Why go the sighing winds unfurled?
To blow me to the end of world.
Why bud the flowers, except that I
May pelt the stars out of the sky?

Why drips the rain its ancient way?
To blot out every yesterday,
And gather time to this one hour,
My golden thoughts its only dower.

Why curves the pool out in the grass?
To make for me a looking-glass,
Where I may see how glad a thing
A girl in love this day in spring!

LIKE WIND BEHIND THE WALL

RUN to me, little cares; run, every fret
And drudgery that prick the uneasy light;
Hold me and hurt me; even in the night
So pack my dreams, I shall forget—forget.
Turn me into a dull, poor, careful thing
Of house and table-settings—nothing more;
A wisp, a shred of what I was before,
Quit of the custom of remembering.
But no and no! Like wind behind the wall,
He wanders sighing down the ancient mold;
Drifts through some crevice, with a racing breath
Of brambles blowing very fair and tall;
Sudden he bursts upon me as of old,
Marching triumphant from the doom of death!

AN AUTUMN DAY

MORE wistful than a bough in spring,
More haunted than an early star,
This day set for remembering,
In hushes where the lonely are.

Its painted windows down the lane—
The trees once thick with plaintive gold—
Are shattered everyone in twain,
The fragments strewn on the grey mould.

And now the wind comes pouring through,
As in an old house none do keep,
Not even an ancient wife or two,
To sigh, and nod, and fall asleep.

HER ANSWER

I AM so new to lovers; hear me out.

For I love jeweled waters, and the call
And rush of winds an ancient door about;
And flowers white or ochre by a wall;
And country windows plaintive with the west;
And I love shepherds, going gravely by
Through the worn light, each with a lamb on breast,
And small, cool music tinkling down the sky.
Now, who the burden of this blame must bear?
That oft my thoughts of you but coldly stir?
Oh, first to Beauty is my fealty due!
To flout her of a sudden were not fair.
But wait until I know you not from her,
Until all lovelinesses change to you.

THE GOOD JOAN

A LONG the thousand roads of France,
Now there, now here, swift as a glance,
A cloud, a mist blown down the sky,
Good Joan of Arc goes riding by.

In Domremy at candlelight,
The orchards blowing rose and white
About the shadowy houses lie;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by

On Avignon there falls a hush,
Brief as the singing of a thrush
Across old gardens April-high;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

The women bring the apples in,
Round Arles when the long gusts begin,
Then sit them down to sob and cry;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

Dim fall of hoofs down old Calais;
In Tours a flash of silver-gray,
Like flaw of rain in a clear sky;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

The Good Joan

Who saith that ancient France shall fail,
A rotting leaf driv'n down the gale?
Then her sons know not how to die;
Then good God dwells no more on high.

Tours, Arles, and Domremy reply!
For Joan of Arc goes riding by.

THE LITTLE SHOE

THE folks were at the apple-gathering
Out in the wind. The house was a still place;
And there along my knees I hid my face.
For lo, amongst some toys, a crumpled thing,
The poor weight of a rose, a bit of red
A little child had worn from chair to chair,
Long Aprils since! Oh, more than I could
bear!
A little child a round of Aprils dead!
I had not known till then that I was sad;—
Old wharves, old streets, the sound of many
tears
Went keenly by me in the daylight's wane;
Yea, all the tears the world had ever had;
The cry of Mary aching down the years!—
I think that I shall never weep again.

QUINCE TREES

BRIEF, white, out in the crooked lane,
My quince tree is in blow again;
If I should live out every spring,
I would not know a lovelier thing.

The sexton's wife has three or more,
Cloud-like about her gusty door;
And wistful girls that by them pass
May see themselves as in a glass.

Oh, everywhere that I do go
The flower of quince is all in blow!
I think of folk who once were here,
But now are gone a many a year.

In that fair country where they are,
Comes there a thought of earth afar,
Blown down the comely ways they know?—
Surely I think it must be so.

All of a sudden they start to talk
Of platters, books, a garden walk;
Of an old plaintive house set down
A windy mile or so from town.

I feel as sure as I were there,
This day of spring is in the air;
And Heaven is but old Huntingdon,
With little white trees in the sun.

THE RECTOR

A TALL man, stooping, not with years, but
books;

His eyes a trifle keen, but flower-blue,

A gusty ruddiness about his looks,

And in his voice a gusty something, too.

Part Sussex he, so frank, some deem him hard;

Part Donegal, and so both warm and quaint;

A proper figure for a minster yard,

And yet too much the man to stay the saint.

A dog, a garden he loves with all his heart;

Each day reads in his thumb'd Greek testament;

Smokes a worn pipe; shares gay news in the lane

With the old fishman in his squeaking cart;

Then climbs to some poor lad, who, fever-spent,

Counts the long moments till he comes again.

FLAGS

A HAND'S length from the dust,
The kitchen door about,
White, purple in the gust,
My mother's flags are out.

Spites go; dreams fall away;
Clerk's gold; and bells of clown;
A book soon has its say;
A king's house tumbles down.

What valor mocks the dust?
What loveliness the rout?—
There, in the April gust,
My mother's flags are out!

TO TIME

(On a false lover.)

ON some grave afternoon, in years to be,
When I pass down the withering country
walks,

Will he be but the scent blown out the stalks
Of the wrecked rose, and nothing more to me?
And I that was?—this wild girl that am I—
But a blurred figure fleeting by the pane?—
I that do eat my heart out, and am fain
To cast myself down on the clods and die?—
But scent, but mist? I will not have it so.
Set us twain fast in some far weather's round;
Press not for me that wine from vale or hill,
Who drink, forgetting youth and yester go.
You dare not. I would dash the cup to ground.
Hurt me. That I loved once, would I love still.

DAFFODILS

THERE is a house builded of God,
Beyond the fret of time or clod;
My mother and my father, too,
And many another that I knew

Are there. And many I did not know,
Young, aged, and mighty folk and low;
The greatest captains, clerks most small;
I cannot think to name them all.

When April weathers by me pass,
And daffodils blow in the grass,
And girls go home from Lenten talks,
Each with a couple of bright stalks,

There comes a vision to my mind,
So comfortable and so kind;—
Beyond the fret of time or clod,
There is a house builded of God.

Like music blown about the sills,
Innumerable daffodils;
All Aprils gathered in one hour,
Lit with the light of that one flower

Daffodils

There golden stalk by golden stalk
Rocks brightly down each garden walk;
It is a mist of shining mould;
It is a world of windy gold.

And there my mother, as she goes,
Plucks her heart's fill of the great rows;
She ever had a lack, a dearth
Of daffodils upon the earth.

Like music blown about the sills,
Unnumbered years of daffodils!
My mother hath at last enough
Of that same golden country stuff.

JOCK A TERRIER

THAT he was small, and fiery, and sweet—
How well we know who had him—and have
not!

As flawless gentleman as one would meet
Outside a book, or knightly Camelot.
Too fleet his days for what he found to do;
Sharp war to wage on strange folk loitering by;
The care of all the house, his mistress, too;
Long wayfarings beneath the country sky.
And now the empty year remembers him;
Mixed with all true and simple things is he;—
And somehow with us still, though he is
dead;—
With stars, and windy paths, and season's whim;
With chimney chronicle and village glee;
And all the tears that ever will be shed.

NOT I

I AM not healed of grief; not I,
Nor shall be till spring boughs forget
Their poignancies down the young sky,
In dusks all violet.

Not I. Not till the year has found
Some other fashion for the rain
In old, thin, autumn fields; its sound
Against a lonely pane.

Not till the worn, dear, usual things—
Street, house, or even a chair, a jar—
Rid them of all rememberings,
Grow strange, and cold, and far.

Who plucks my cowslips in the sun?
Whose step fleets by the withered tree?
Whose shadowy, golden laughter run
Betwixt my books and me?

They have been gone a thousand years.
I grant it. Are the deeps fallen dry?
Wears grief a look not that of tears?—
Not I, indeed, not I.

AT FIRST

I AM so new to tears, I do not know
What trick to use and cheat my aching heart;
What word to speak and ease it of the smart.
I think a book may comfort me. Not so.
His voice reads on with mine; the verse grows dim.
Or a green highway that he never knew?
Not so. Some whirl of petals down the dew—
It is a road that once I went with him!
Sometimes, in very wantonness of grief,
I look into my mirror on the shelf;
“How short a state for April did I keep,
Whose face was fair as uncurled almond leaf!—
Who said this pretty thing of my lost self?”
I yield me then, and weep, and weep, and weep.

FOG

THE great ghosts of the town
Up and down,
Each a gray, filmy thing,
Go by.
Sudden a brief, wet sky!—
A file of poplars vague with spring.

Drips the old garden there;
See, its torn edge about,
Scarlet, remote,
Tulips flare,
The length of one thin note!—
And are put out.

TO MY MOTHER

YOU were too exquisite a thing to hold.
For what am I to bide with Beauty's self,
Who know as little of its strange, its old,
As a plucked flower in cup upon a shelf?
If I craved loveliness—your laughter then
Spilled music after music on the air;
You petaled into bloom again, again,
In shop, or road, or down some wistful stair.
But Beauty's state is fleet as that of gust
Blown by the door. The dead folk keep it fast,
Argent, uncloseted, secure with spring.
Because I weep, my head bowed to the dust,
Is not that with your own you walk at last,
But that I am so poor, so poor a thing!

TO MY MOTHER

II

AH, this at first! And yet right well I see
That still is Beauty fast at every door;
The earth stands firm; the winds about it pour;
There is no withering of any tree.
I see that yester lurks in old, in new,
A delicate wraith each loveliness behind;
Each flower owns some fair double of its kind;
I pluck not one, but twain, of the same blue.
For grief has scourged me into vision clear.—
What grave and splendid highways by me run!
What unremembered white at village wall!
What sweet looks get I from each wayfarer
here!—
Since Beauty lasts, and yesters everyone,
So near you come, you are not dead at all!

CYNTHIA'S SONG

AS I came down the Old York Road
Saint John's began to ring,
Across the Dead Folk in the grass,
The wide new dusk of spring.

Each window was a half-blown flower,
The pool beneath the hedge
Looked like a scrap of Tyrian gold
Dropped thinly in the sedge.

I think that never in the world
Blew there a tree so white
As the wild cherry by the wall,
So lonely to the sight.

As I came down the Old York Road
Not any soul was near,
Except two lovers going by
Within the fleet of year.

Oh, windows flowering in the dusk!
Oh, pool of fragile gold!
Oh bough, fair as my early love,
Gone with the dreams of old!

Saint John's grey bell, that grieving bell.
Struck out of the frail sky
Such gusts of old, lost things—I felt
That I must weep or die.

FOR AN ANTHOLOGY OF SAD SONGS

IN Tyre, when the leaf grew brown,
Girls sighed, and fell remembering
How golden blew the iris down
The sea-lanes on a day in spring;
Across the little blur of sun
All Camelot went a wistful thing.

Ours is that note of long ago,
Into the crumbling weather thrust.
Tall, fragrant gardens that we know
Await their tombs out in the gust;
And maidens hold too fleet a state;
And towers are broken into dust.

Within this book blows autumn still;
These lovely sighing voices all
A memorable music spill
Along some wet old country wall;
Round poignant houses, lit with dusk,
It drifts like April at the fall.

Here two by two these lovers pass,
With brooding eyes, that seek again
Some lost flower in the frayed long grass,
Or the white apricot up the lane;
Here are they pent at end of year
In the small silver of the rain.

THE LOAD

WHAT bitterness of grief is mine to bear?
That nothings last. Beloved, you are dead.
That shops are lit at dusk; that in the square
Folk buy them pots of hyacinths white or red.
If but one thing were different; were there two,
Not seven poplars down the roadway set,
And black and broken, not silver-green and new,
I think indeed I would forget—forget.
That nothings last! A house, a field, a street,
Wedged fast in fast, and unremembering ways.
Oh, these poor littles will I from me thrust,
And forth to some strange other spring-time fleet;
Else fling myself upon these April days,
And with my wild hands tear them into dust!

CHESTNUT HILL

I KNEW an old house by a wood,
A very lovely thing;
There flag-flowers blew; and it was good
To come that way in spring.

But it is dust a many a day;
A weed-thick mound appears,
Where the thrush shook the dusk of May
Into a gust of tears.

Even a king's house tumbles down;
A roof is soon forgot;
So was it once in Corinth town,
So once in Camelot.

A PICTURE

BEAUTY, what have we here? A spare, old
street

Rich with mid-afternoon. A hawker there—
His voice a gusty brawl along the air,
Mixed with his creaking cart and stamp of feet—
Sells April wares. A woman bent and sad
Now haggles o'er a pot of windy gold;
Now, with her poor coins slipped from out her hold,
Lifts it high in the sun with fingers glad,
And shrills her bargain to the neighbors all.
A straggly bough, across the fences hoar,
A handful of its green and silver spills.
The cart creaks out the street. A blur of wall
The houses stand. And last, still at her door,
A woman with a pot of daffodils.

HER SON

IS there a shop where he comes not to buy?
Or any book he stoops not down to read?
Or song he sings not? Or a golden weed
In a field's corner that he draws not nigh?
Each word stirs up a hundred echoes dim
Of one he said. Like scent of dusk on stair,
Each day spills some new memory down the air,
And each night roofs another dream of him.
What of a road where he has never come?
All ways have him for house and host at last.
If they be bare, I think of his white spring;
If they be not, then am I stricken dumb.
Their ache of fairness makes his presence fast,
More certain of my old remembering.

HIS MOTHER IN HER HOOD OF BLUE

WHEN Jesus was a little thing,
His mother, in her hood of blue,
Called to Him through the dusk of spring:
"Jesus, my Jesus, where are you?"

Caught in a gust of whirling bloom,
She stood a moment at the door,
Then lit the candle in the room,
In its pink earthen bowl of yore.

The little Jesus saw it all;—
The blur of yellow in the street;
The fair trees by the tumbling wall;
The shadowy other lads, whose feet

Struck a quick noise from out the grass;
He saw, dim in the half-lit air,
As one sees folk within a glass,
His mother with her candle there.

Jesus! Jesus!

When He a weary man became,
I think, as He went to and fro,

His Mother in Her Hood of Blue

He heard her calling just the same
Across that dusk so long ago.

Jesus!

For men were tired that had been bold;—
And strange indeed this should befall—
One day so hot, one day so cold—
But mothers never change at all.

Jesus!

PRESCIENCE

OLD women think of old roofs, and the things
That made these comely in the ancient sun;
Old men think of their wars, their wayfarings done.
Both of first love; of fair, dispersèd springs.
Old women and old men—God rest them all!—
To hear the dark, slow waters lap about;
To see their last of candle spluttering out;—
It is too poor an ending to befall.
But ours this golden earth from sky to sky;
And all my thoughts of you, and yours of me;
About us memorable April set.—
Sudden I feel the fleet years tumbling by;
Age stares at me behind each rosy tree!—
Oh, snatch me to your heart! I would forget.

POSSESSIONS

AN old and quiet house set down
A windy field or two from town.

And a great clump of lavender,
All day with cross, small bees astir.

Larkspur, hot-blue as with a sting;
And mint, so brief and sharp a thing.

Tall, well-thumbed books upon a shelf;
A green, white-flowered jug of delf.

Old friends, who from the village walk
On Sunday afternoons, to talk

Of the new shop; the guests from town;
The wind that blew the apples down.

They go; the dusk comes from afar,
Like music blown from out a star.

Those Others drift across the dew;
My early love—and you—and you!

IT IS THE TIME IN HUNTINGDON

IT is the time in Huntingdon,
When spicewood boughs are quick to blow,
Like gold of Tarshish down the sun,
Beyond the roofs, a field or so.

Rude, potent, scriptural the scent;
Long since was such or such a one;
In lean tall jars was spikenard pent
Down the mad quays of Babylon.

And some wayfarer, loving spring,
And that wild, profitable gold,
Plucks sprig or two of the young thing
For some grey window-shelf to hold.

I am not there to see them blow,
The spicewood boughs across the wind,
Beyond the roofs a field or so,
Yet fast they keep within my mind.

Snatched out of March and the gust's brawl,
They light my house with Huntingdon;—
That simple yellow by the wall,
Fit for a Song of Solomon.

Date Due

Due

Returned

Due

Returned

JUN 29 1991

811.5
R329s
C.2

Spicewood, main
811.5R329s C.2



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